

THE LIFE AND WRITINGS

possible, and particularly so far as respects constitutional difficulty. I had rather ask an enlargement of power from the nation, where it is found necessary, than to assume it by a construction which would make our powers boundless. Our peculiar security is in the possession of a written Constitution. I do not make it a blank paper by construction. * * * however, our friends shall think differently, certainly I shall acquiesce with satisfaction, confiding that the good sense of the country will correct the evil of construction when it shall produce ill effects."

The President's message to Congress reviewed the negotiations leading up to the purchase, but had not a word to say any constitutional obstacle to its ratification. The question of constitutionality he shifted to the shoulders of others. The ensuing debate shows how closely the arguments of the opposition unconsciously followed the lines of Jefferson's secret missions to his friends. John Randolph, the administrative leader, moved that the treaty be carried into effect, and it was immediately taken up. The speeches of the opposition tax the powers of the best Republican debaters. They skillfully concentrated their attacks upon the very feature of the treaty which its advocates knew themselves to be weakest — its pledge to admit the people of Louisiana into the Union. No logic or oratory could shake the determination of the majority. The passage of Randolph's resolution was a foregone conclusion; and after one day's debate, it was passed by a strict party vote of 90 to 25.

The debate in the Senate followed much the same lines as the House, with the exception of two speeches. Tracy, of Connecticut, gave a sectional turn to it by declaring that "the relative strength which this admission gives to a southern and western interest is contradictory to the principles of our original Union. To admit Louisiana — a world, and such a world — into the Union would be absorbing the Northern States." John Quincy Adams, elected as a moderate Federalist, held a unique view

^tSee Constitutionality, page 174.